ANIMAL LEARNING CENTER · NOT CURRENTLY AT THE ZOO

CHEETAH

Acinonyx jubatus

Teacher & Student Fact Sheet · © **2026 Plumpton Park Zoological Gardens Inc.**
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Fast facts

ANIMAL GROUP	Mammal — cat family (Felidae)
NATIVE REGION	Mainly southern and eastern Africa; also elsewhere in Africa and in Iran
HABITAT	Semi-open country with cover
DIET	Carnivore — mainly gazelles, impala, springbok
SIZE	41–60 in long, plus a 20–34 in tail
WEIGHT	57–141 lb
LIFESPAN	About 6–8 years in the wild
STATUS	Vulnerable (IUCN)



A cheetah in Tanzania. Photo: ian hoff on Unsplash.

Did you know?

- A cheetah can reach a top speed of 65 to 70 miles per hour.
- A cheetah has about 30 seconds to catch its prey.
- In field studies, 25 to 38 percent of hunts succeeded.
- Young cubs wear a mantle of long, gray hair over the back, neck and top of the head.
- A 2017 study estimated about 7,100 adults and adolescents, down from an estimated 100,000 in 1900.

Words to know

Carnivore: an animal that eats other animals.
Coalition: a small group of male cheetahs, often brothers, that live and hunt together.
Diurnal: active during the day.
Vulnerable: a conservation status meaning a species faces a high risk of dying out in the wild.

Think about it

1. Name three body features that help a cheetah run fast.
2. Why does a cheetah have to catch its prey so quickly?
3. How do lions and hyenas make life harder for cheetahs?
4. How do young cheetah cubs look different from adults?
5. Why are there far fewer cheetahs today than in 1900?

Draw it

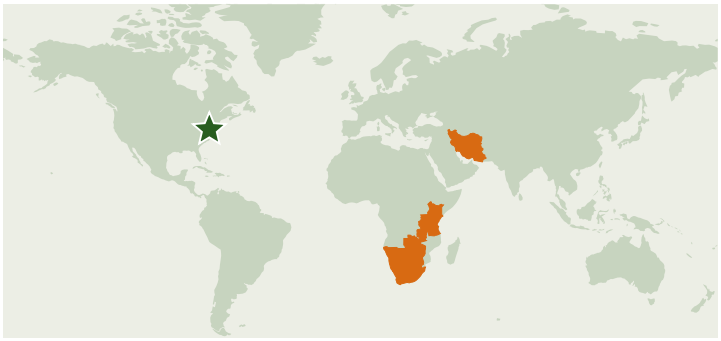
In the box below, draw a cheetah chasing a gazelle across the grassland. Show its long legs, flexible spine, steering tail and tear marks. Label each part.

STANDARDS · GRADES 1–4 **WRITTEN FOR GRADES 3–5**

Maryland and Delaware (NGSS): **4-LS1-1 · 1-LS3-1 · 3-LS4-3**
Pennsylvania (STEELS): **3.1.4.A · 3.1.1.C · 3.1.3.G**

Draw here

Where it lives in the wild



Lives in the wild ★ Plumpton Park Zoo, Rising Sun, MD

Learn more: plumptonparkzoo.org/mammals/cheetah/ · **Sources:** IUCN Red List; Mammalian Species 771; Durant et al. (2017); Wilson et al. (2013); Marker (2002); Cheetah Conservation Fund; Animal Diversity Web.
Supports Maryland and Delaware (NGSS) and Pennsylvania (STEELS) standards: 4-LS1-1 (3.1.4.A) · 1-LS3-1 (3.1.1.C) · 3-LS4-3 (3.1.3.G)
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CHEETAH

Before and after your research

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Before you research · 5 minutes

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. Predict: where in the wild does the cheetah live?

Circle one (or more if it lives on more than one):

Africa | Asia | Australia | Europe | North America | South America

2. Predict: what does it eat?

☐ plants ☐ other animals ☐ both

3. Word hunt: find these words on page 1. Put a check by each one you already know.

☐ Carnivore ☐ Coalition ☐ Diurnal ☐ Vulnerable

Pick one word and write what it means in your own words:

_____

_____

4. My question: one thing I want to find out about the cheetah.

_____

_____

While you research

Read the animal page:

plumptonparkzoo.org/mammals/cheetah/

Write two facts you did not know before.

_____

_____

_____

Draw or describe one body part that helps it survive, and say how it helps.

Draw here

After your research · talk it over

1. Check your prediction. Native region: Mainly southern and eastern Africa, also Iran. Was your guess right?

☐ yes ☐ no ☐ partly

2. Diet check. The fact sheet says: Carnivore — mainly gazelles, impala, springbok. What did you learn about how it finds or eats food?

_____

_____

3. Discuss with a partner, then write your best answer.

• Why does a cheetah have to catch its prey so quickly?

_____

• How do lions and hyenas make life harder for cheetahs?

_____

4. Exit ticket.

One thing I learned: _____

One thing I still wonder: _____

ADJUST IT

Grades K–2: talk and draw instead of writing; read the questions aloud. **Grades 6–8:** add evidence from the fact sheet and the animal page to every answer.